

FAQ: 2020 Flu Vaccine



It is likely that flu viruses and the virus that causes COVID-19 will both spread as a “Twindemic” this fall and winter. Here is what you should know this season, including information on how to protect yourself and your family against the flu by getting a flu vaccine.

Why Get a Flu Vaccine?

Flu can be deadly. The CDC indicated that an estimated 35.5 million people got sick with influenza during the 2018–2019 season. Data also shows that 16.5 million people visited a health care provider for their illness, 490,600 people were hospitalized, and 34,200 people died from influenza.

The flu vaccine can save lives. Approximately 49 percent of the U.S. population chose to get a flu vaccine during the 2018-2019 flu season, and this prevented an estimated:

- 4.4 million flu illnesses, more than the population Los Angeles
- 58,000 flu hospitalizations, about the number of students at Ohio State University
- 3,500 flu deaths, equivalent to saving about ten lives per day over a year

The flu vaccine can reduce sick days. According to various studies, it is estimated that U.S. employees miss over 100 million workdays annually because of the flu.

Quick Facts

An estimated 35.5M people got sick with influenza during the 2018–2019 season

Approximately 49% of the U.S. Population chose to get a flu vaccine during this time

Flu shots received in the 2018-2019 season prevented an estimated 4.4M flu illnesses, 58,000 flu hospitalizations, and 3,500 flu deaths

U.S. employees miss over 100M workdays annually because of the flu

Children younger than six months of age are too young to get a flu shot
A yearly flu shot is recommended for everyone aged six months or older

People with severe, life-threatening allergies to the flu vaccine or any ingredient in the vaccine should not get a flu shot



Getting a flu vaccine is more important than ever during the 2020-2021 season to protect yourself and the people around you from flu and to help reduce the strain on healthcare systems responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Who Should Get a Flu Vaccine?

The [CDC](#) recommends the annual flu vaccination for everyone six months of age and older, [with rare exceptions](#), because it is an effective way to decrease flu illnesses, hospitalizations, and deaths. Different flu shots are approved for people of different ages. Everyone should get a vaccine that is appropriate for their age.

Vaccination is particularly important for people who are at high risk of developing serious flu-related complications. This includes people 65 years and older, people with certain chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, or heart disease), pregnant women, and children younger than five years.

Talk to your health care provider if you have any questions regarding which influenza vaccines are best for you and your family.

Who Should NOT Get a Flu Vaccine?

Children younger than six months of age are too young to get a flu shot.

People with severe, life-threatening allergies to the flu vaccine or any ingredient in the vaccine should not get a flu shot. Visit the [CDC website](#) for more information about egg allergies and flu vaccine.

I Got a Flu Shot Last Year -- Do I Need Another One This Year?

According to the CDC, a yearly flu shot is recommended for everyone aged six months or older. The flu virus changes slightly every year and the vaccine is modified for new strains of the virus on an annual basis.

When Should I Get Vaccinated?

The CDC recommends that people get a flu vaccine by the end of October. Children 6 months to 8 years may need two doses of vaccine to be protected and should start the vaccination process late summer/early fall because the two doses must be given at least four weeks apart.

Does the Flu Vaccine Work Right Away?

No. It takes about two weeks after vaccination for antibodies to develop and provide protection against influenza virus infection. That is why it is best to get vaccinated before influenza viruses start to spread in your community.

How Effective is the Flu Vaccine?

While vaccine effectiveness can vary, recent CDC studies show that flu vaccination reduces the risk of flu illness by between 40% and 60% among the overall population during seasons when most circulating flu viruses are well-matched to the flu vaccine.

How Long Does the Flu Shot Last?

Protection from the influenza vaccine is thought to persist for at least six months. Protection declines over time because of waning antibody levels and because of changes in circulating influenza viruses from year to year.

Where Can I Get a Flu Vaccine?

Some locations that typically offer flu shots, like workplaces, might not be able to this year due to concerns around maintaining coronavirus precautions such as social distancing. Please check with your employer on whether they will offer flu shots this year.

Pharmacies (including national chains like CVS and Walgreens), doctors' offices, and health departments around the country are offering vaccines, which are typically free with insurance. Find a location near you with the CDC's VaccineFinder tool or visit your in-network pharmacy website.

How Much Do Flu Shots Cost?

Flu shots at most in-network pharmacies are available through your medical or pharmacy insurance coverage at no out-of-pocket cost to you. If you are insured through the Affordable Care Act, Medicare Part B, or most other insurance plans, you should be able to get your flu shot for free at your doctor's office. If you decide to go to your doctor, make sure to call ahead for an appointment and know that in some cases you may still have to pay for the office visit. Many public health departments and clinics also offer low-cost or free flu shots across the U.S.

What is the Difference Between Influenza (Flu) and COVID-19?

Flu and COVID-19 share many characteristics and can have varying degrees of signs and symptoms, ranging from no symptoms (asymptomatic) to severe symptoms. Based on the best available information to date, common symptoms that COVID-19 and flu share include:

- Fever or feeling feverish/chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue (tiredness)
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle pain or body aches
- Headache
- Some people may have vomiting and diarrhea, though this is more common in children than adults

Other signs and symptoms of COVID-19 that are different from flu, may include change in or loss of taste or smell. It is also important to note that *not everyone* with flu or COVID-19 will have a fever.

[Visit the CDC website for more information about the 2020-2021 flu season and COVID-19.](#)